

House Bill 576

By: Representatives Oliver of the 83rd, Mosby of the 90th, Henson of the 87th, Stephenson of the 92nd, Benfield of the 85th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

To amend Part 1 of Article 16 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to school attendance in elementary and secondary education, so as to revise certain provisions relating to mandatory attendance; to require new residents in a local school system to enroll a child within 30 days; to provide for reporting violations of mandatory attendance requirements; to provide that a local school system official who fails to make certain reports is guilty of a misdemeanor; to provide that a person who fails to enroll a child is guilty of a misdemeanor; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Part 1 of Article 16 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to school attendance in elementary and secondary education, is amended by revising Code Section 20-2-690.1, relating to mandatory education for children, as follows:

"20-2-690.1.

(a) Mandatory attendance in a public school, private school, or home school program shall be required for children between their sixth and sixteenth birthdays. Such mandatory attendance shall not be required where the child has successfully completed all requirements for a high school diploma. Any parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of any child or children subject to mandatory attendance pursuant to this subsection who becomes a new resident of a local school system in this state shall within 30 days of such new residency enroll such child or children in a public school, a private school, or a home study program that meets the requirements for a public school, a private school, or a home study program. Failure to enroll such child or children within 30 days shall constitute a violation of this Code section.

(b) Every parent, guardian, or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children during the ages of mandatory attendance as required in

subsection (a) of this Code section shall enroll and send such child or children to a public school, a private school, or a home study program that meets the requirements for a public school, a private school, or a home study program; and such child shall be responsible for ~~enrolling in and~~ attending a public school, a private school, or a home study program that meets the requirements for a public school, a private school, or a home study program under such penalty for noncompliance with this subsection as is provided in Chapter 11 of Title 15, unless the child's failure to enroll and attend is caused by the child's parent, guardian, or other person, in which case the parent, guardian, or other person alone shall be responsible; provided, however, that tests and physical exams for military service and the National Guard and such other approved absences as provided for by law or by the local board of education shall be excused absences. The requirements of this subsection shall apply to a child during the ages of mandatory attendance as required in subsection (a) of this Code section who has been assigned by a local board of education or its delegate to attend an alternative public school program established by that local board of education, including an alternative public school program provided for in Code Section 20-2-154.1, regardless of whether such child has been suspended or expelled from another public school program by that local board of education or its delegate, and to the parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of such child. Nothing in this Code section shall be construed to require a local board of education or its delegate to assign a child to attend an alternative public school program rather than suspending or expelling the child.

~~(c) Any parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of a child or children and who shall violate this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00, imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, community service, or any combination of such penalties, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction. Each day's absence from school in violation of this part after the child's school system notifies the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child of five unexcused days of absence for a child shall constitute a separate offense. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child of five unexcused days of absence without response, the school system shall send a notice to such parent, guardian, or other person by certified mail, return receipt requested. Public schools shall provide to the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each child enrolled in public school a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance under this Code section for children and their parents, guardians, or other persons having control or charge of children. The parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child or children shall~~

~~sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties; children who are age ten years or older by September 1 shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties. After two reasonable attempts by the school to secure such signature or signatures, the school shall be considered to be in compliance with this subsection if it sends a copy of the statement, via certified mail, return receipt requested, to such parent, guardian, other person who has control or charge of a child, or children. Public schools shall retain signed copies of statements through the end of the school year.~~

~~(d)~~(c) Local school superintendents in the case of private schools or home study programs and visiting teachers and attendance officers in the case of public schools shall have authority and it shall be their duty to file proceedings in court to enforce this subpart.

(d)(1) Local school system officials shall make and file a report to the appropriate enforcement agency regarding any parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of any child or children subject to mandatory attendance requirements pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section who have accumulated 25 days of unexcused absences. Any person required to make a report pursuant to this paragraph who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

(2) Local school system officials or other persons may make and file a report to the appropriate enforcement agency regarding any parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of any child or children subject to mandatory attendance requirements pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section whose child or children are not regularly attending school.

(3) Local school system officials or other persons may make and file a report to the appropriate enforcement agency regarding any parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of any child or children subject to mandatory attendance requirements pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section if it appears that such parent, guardian, or other person has knowingly violated any of the provisions of this Code section.

(4) Local school systems shall cooperate in the investigation and prosecution of mandatory attendance violations in accordance with Code Section 20-2-694.

(e) No case shall constitute a violation of this Code section unless said child has accumulated five or more days of unexcused absences. Each day's absence from school in violation of this part after the child's school system or its designee notifies the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child of five unexcused days of absence for a child shall constitute a separate offense. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child of five unexcused days of absence without response, the school system shall send a notice to such

parent, guardian, or other person by certified mail, return receipt requested and upon doing so, the school system shall be considered to be in compliance with this subsection.

~~(e)~~(f) An unemancipated minor who is older than the age of mandatory attendance as required in subsection (a) of this Code section who has not completed all requirements for a high school diploma who wishes to withdraw from school shall have the written permission of his or her parent or legal guardian prior to withdrawing. Prior to accepting such permission, the school principal or designee shall convene a conference with the child and parent or legal guardian within two school days of receiving notice of the intent of the child to withdraw from school. The principal or designee shall make a reasonable attempt to share with the student and parent or guardian the educational options available, including the opportunity to pursue a general educational development (GED) diploma and the consequences of not having earned a high school diploma, including lower lifetime earnings, fewer jobs for which the student will be qualified, and the inability to avail oneself of higher educational opportunities. Every local board of education shall adopt a policy on the process of voluntary withdrawal of unemancipated minors who are older than the mandatory attendance age. The policy shall be filed with the Department of Education no later than January 1, 2007. The Department of Education shall provide annually to all local school superintendents model forms for the parent or guardian signature requirement contained in this subsection and updated information from reliable sources relating to the consequences of withdrawing from school without completing all requirements for a high school diploma. Such form shall include information relating to the opportunity to pursue a general educational development (GED) diploma and the consequences of not having earned a high school diploma, including lower lifetime earnings, fewer jobs for which the student will be qualified, and the inability to avail oneself of higher educational opportunities. Each local school superintendent shall provide such forms and information to all of its principals of schools serving grades six through ~~twelve~~ 12 for the principals to use during the required conference with the child and parent or legal guardian.

(g)(1) Any parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of a child or children and who shall fail to send such child or children in a public school, a private school, or a home study program in accordance with this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00, imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, community service, or any combination of such penalties, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction.

(2) Any parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of a child or children and who shall fail to enroll such child or children in a public school, a private school, or a home study program in accordance with this Code section shall be

137 guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to punishment as
138 for a misdemeanor with the exception that any imprisonment portion of the sentence shall
139 not exceed 30 days."

140 **SECTION 2.**

141 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.